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Chaos

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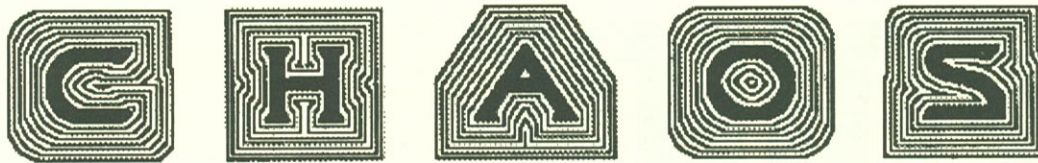


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by **Sandra K. Paul**
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U.S. and INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE

Electronic Data Interchange in the United States

Organizations in the book industry have been sending orders to each other in electronic form since 1975. In May, 1989 the Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee (BISAC) was rocked by the news that its four largest book buying members—B. Dalton, Waldenbooks, Ingram and Baker & Taylor — were moving from the industry-specific BISAC formats for electronic interchange of business data to the formats developed by "X12." As the publishing/library/bookselling community has learned since, "X12" is the Standards Committee accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to develop standards in the area of electronic business interchange, properly called ASC (Accredited Standards Committee) X12.

Since then, BISAC has become a voting member of ASC X12, reviewing and voting on all proposed new formats; established a coordinator for its X12 activities, Tom Clarkson of Harpeth Systems; educated each of the individuals chairing a functional format Subcommittee (e.g. the Order, Invoice and Order Acknowledgement Format Subcommittee Chairs) about X12; finalized the form in which the listings of data elements in BISAC

shipments. These X12 formats will be presented at the September 21, 1990 BISAC meeting and, after modification to accommodate member-input, hopefully approved at the November 16, 1990 meeting.

The Serials Industry Systems Advisory Committee (SISAC) waited until May, 1990 to determine that they will discontinue the development of electronic serial orders, claims, cancellations and acknowledgements through the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) and do so on their own. They were most impressed with a realistic description of NISO's concerns about ASC X12, which was presented at their May meeting by Paul Peters of the Association of Research Libraries, who is NISO's current Chairperson.

What will be required is the willingness on both sides to compromise what they have in place in order to reach the goal of formats that can be used anywhere in the world.

formats will be compared with those in X12; and started testing orders and invoices converted to the ASC X12 format from the BISAC format by third-party support organizations. By September, 1990 they hope to have identified the ASC X12 formats, segments and data elements required by the book industry for ordering, order acknowledging, invoicing, sales reporting, supplying title information and informational updates, payment advises and advance notification of

Paul described the comprehensive review of ASC X12 and other ordering formats prepared for the Library of Congress by Elaine Woods. Based on a review of the report, the NISO Standards Development Committee recommended that NISO accept the use of ASC X12 formats for use by its constituents in the publishing, library, information science community; the NISO Board of Directors will establish policy on this matter at its early June

meeting. Meanwhile, SISAC has established an X12 Coordinator (Sandy Paul of SKP Associates) and agreed to proceed with specifying the X12 formats, segments and data elements required for serial ordering, claiming, cancelling, acknowledging those functions, acknowledging an order, and for invoicing. Sandy will take responsibility for insuring that BISAC and SISAC format development is coordinated.

International Electronic Data Interchange

Since 1982 the Working Group of European Librarians and Publishers (ELP) has met at least once a year to "promote cooperation among European and other publishers and librarians." Their members are affiliated with the GELC (*Groupe des Editeurs de Livres dans la CEE* — the group of European member associations of the International Publishers Association) or to IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, through its Advisory Committee for the Universal Availability of Publications). In the past this group has analyzed and issued "joint statements" in the areas of Library Budgets, Electronic Technology, and Full Text CDROMs.

Their most recent Joint Recommendation is entitled "One World of Information: OSI and EDI, Publishers', Librarians' and Booksellers' Use of Open Systems Interconnection in Electronic Data Interchange." They encourage

publishers, librarians and booksellers "to engage themselves in this growing field to ensure that the new (electronic) messages will" meet their needs. They specifically point to the EDIFACT (the United Nations' Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transportation) format, which have been approved for ordering; other formats are under development for other types of transactions.

One Standard for the Future

Acknowledging the proliferation of X12 format users in the U.S. as well as the existence of EDIFACT and its acceptance among the international community, the leaders of ASC X12 have formed a group responsible for the eventual

merging of the X12 and EDIFACT formats. Technically they are not very different. What will be required is the willingness on both sides to compromise what they have in place in order to reach the goal of formats that can be used anywhere in the world. With EC92 approaching and the internationalization of the publishing industry alive, publishers, librarians and booksellers understand the importance of being a part of a world-wide community. We must continue the development of standards for electronic communication of business transactions between publishers, wholesalers, subscription agents, booksellers and librarians and make the compromises necessary for their international use. (A related discussion of some of these issues appeared in ATG v.1#4.)

